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S E R M O N

Preach'd at the ASSIZES at

Bury St Edmonds

In Suffolk, March 23. 170⁸.

Before the Right Honourable, Sir Edward
Ward, Lord Chief Baron of Her Majesty's
Court of Exchequer.

A N D

Published at the Request of the Gentlemen of the Grand
Juries for the County, and for the Liberty of Bury
St Edmonds.

GEO. RATMOND, Minister of
St Lawrence in Ipswich.

Printed and Sold by E. Burges, near
the Red-Well. 1708.

...and Confession ... On The Day of ...

EDMOND

Recorded at the Assizes at

Bury St Edmunds

In Suffolk, March 23. 1701.

To the Right Honourable Sir William ...
Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Exchequer



...of the Request of the Gentlemen of the Grand ...
...for the County, and for the Liberty of Bury ...
St Edmunds

WILLIAM RATMOND, Minister of ...
St Edmunds in Suffolk.

Printed and Sold by M. DODD, near ...
the Red-Lion, 1708.

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2 CHRON. xix. ix.

*And he charged them saying, thus shall ye do in the
Fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect
Heart.*

THese Words are the Charge or Instructions, given by King *Jehosaphat* to the Judges and Justiciaries, whom he had appointed in *Jerusalem*, as also in the other Cities of *Judah*. For so you read in ver. 5. and 8. He set Judges in the Land, throughout all the Fenced Cities of *Judah*: Moreover in *Jerusalem* did *Jehosaphat* set of the Levites and Priests, and of the chief of the Fathers of *Israel*, for the Judgment of the Lord and for Controversies. That is for Causes both Ecclesiastical and Civil, there arising, or brought thither (as to the Supream Court) by Appeal. And having thus settled the Judicatories, He Charged the Judges saying, thus shall ye do, &c.

A short Charge, but full of Sense and Meaning; in which we have assign'd the great and sure principles, of doing well and worthily, viz. *Sense of Honour, and Conscience of Duty, Faithfulness and the Fear of God*. And the good estate of that mind, which is influenced by these principles, is likewise noted: That Heart is perfect; **A 2** sound

found and whole, under one uniform byass, and pleas'd and satisfy'd with being so.

Sense of Honour, and Conscience of Duty are the united Principles of doing well and worthily; *Faithfulness and the Fear of God.*

And this is the Rule, and the summ of our Duty with respect to each other in our several stations, that we do *Faithfully.*

And such Faithfulness issueth from a perfect Heart ; and is accompanied with the peace of a good Conscience; whereas unfaithfulness doth wound the Conscience, divide the Man, and sets him most wretchedly against himself.

These are the Instructions from the Words, which I shall briefly illustrate ; and then endeavour usefully and properly to apply them.

1st, Sense of Honour, and Conscience of Duty, are united Principles of well doing : Faithfulness, and the Fear of God, must not be seperated. To Reverence ones self, so as to scorn a base and dishonourable Action ; this is the Moral Principle. And to Reverence God, so as to be cautious of offending, and studious to please him ; this is the Religious Principle. And these hath God joyned, so that none may separte, or put them asunder. Moral rectitude or goodness, consists in the agreeableness of our voluntary Actions, with our Rational Nature : That the Things we do be right and fit, seemly and honourable. Whatsoever is immoral, is unseemly ; 'tis an ugly blemish, which makes the Person that hath it base and vile. Nor is there any one so great, who hath Authority enough, to bring Vertue into discredit, or Vice into reputation : But immoral practice will disparage and vili-

vilifie him, be he as great as he will. Therefore saith
 Tully, *Honestum id intelligimus, quod per se ipsam possit* de Finib.
l. 2.
jure laudari. That is *Honest*, which is *Honourable*; that
 is morally Good, which setting aside all consideration
 of Reward, is in itself seemly, and worthy of praise.
 And again, *Quis est tam dissimilis homini*, &c. who de Finib.
l. 5.
 (saith he) is so divested of humanity, as not to be of-
 fended with the baseness of that which is dishonest;
 or pleas'd with the loveliness of Vertue? Who is there
 (saith he) that doth not dislike, and hate impudence
 in Youth, and unbridled Licentiousness? Who doth
 not on the contrary commend and love Modesty in
 Young Persons, and Sobriety and Diligence, tho, they
 be not his Kindred or Friends, tho himself hath no
 Interest or Concern in them? Yea thus likewise it is
 with God himself. What is his Honour and Glory; is
 at his Power and Greatness, that he can do what he
 will: Is it not rather that such Power and Will
 are in conjunction with Wisdom and Goodness,
 so that he will do nothing, but what is reason-
 able and fit? And this is the Image of God to which
 we were created, and are by Jesus Christ restored;
 and this is the Perfection and Glory of Man, that he
 hath in him somewhat better than Will and Power, to
 direct and influence them, viz. The Knowledge, and
 approbation, and Love of what is fit and reasonable,
 right and good.

Therefore it is, that God who hath thus framed our
 Nature, doth refer us to our selves: Willing us, *To con-* M. 40. 8.
Hag. 1. 5.
Luke 12.
57. John.
7. 24.
Ro. 12. 9.
sider our ways: To remember and shew our selves Men: To
judge of our selves what is right: To abhor that which is
evil, and cleave to that which is good. And the like; in
 many

many places of Holy Writ, too well known, to need a particular enumeration.

Let us then Reverence our selves, keep a Sense of Honour, and abhor every thing which is base and vile; look at the truth of Things, what is a disparagement and what is seemly; and charge our selves accordingly: This is one great and effectual Principle of good and worthy performance. But we must also add to this, Reverence of God, and Sense of Duty; Religion must come in to the support of Morality, *viz.* a just consideration of Gods most Righteous Authority and reasonable Law; a studious imitation of his most excellent Perfections, and veneration of his most amiable Nature; with an earnest desire to have him our Friend, to whom we are so exceedingly obliged, and of whom we stand in continual and greatest need.

Indeed he that doth not so Reverence himself, as to scorn what is base and dishonorable, can as little Reverence God. He may be afraid of his Powerful Anger, but doth not esteem and regard that amiable goodness, which is the brightest Excellency, and most adorable Perfection of the Divine Nature. He hath no desire of being like God, or care of being accepted with him; but only a slavish dread of suffering, what for such neglect and contempt of God, he is Conscious he hath deserv'd. But then, he that liveth not in a lively Sense of God, and a Religious application to him, will find the Principle of Honour, (if any remains) too weak oftentimes to grapple with Worldly Interests; and to master the importunate Temptations to unfaithfulness.

Let

Let us therefore think upon God, and consider our selves; Revere his Authority, and Respect the Dignity of our Nature; consider that as the Things we are charged withal, are in themselves most reasonable and fit, seemly for us, good and profitable for Men; so likewise they are the Will of our God, and well pleasing to him, and bound upon us by his most Righteous Authority and Law; and this two-fold Cord will not be easily broken; Sense of Honour and Conscience of Duty, going hand in hand, will be a strong and lasting Principle of just and worthy performance. Thus did *Joseph* resist and conquer a very great and violent Temptation, when there was nothing else to restrain him, but a joynt Sense of Honour, and Conscience of Duty. He consider'd his Obligation to his Master, who had reposed so great Trust in him, and his Duty to God who had forbidden such Wickedness. *My Master Gen. 39. (saith he) hath committed all that he hath to my Hands, neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but Thee, because Thou art his Wife: How then can I do this great Wickedness, and Sin against God? We had better deal with Men of Honour only, than with Pretenders to Religion for Worldly Designs and Interests; but we can be sure of no Man, who doth not Reverence God and make Conscience of his doings.*

2dly, This is the Rule, and this is the Summary of our Duty to each other in our respective stations, that we do Faithfully.

That we well consider the Trust reposed in us, and discharge it honestly; this is our Rule, and this must be our care. It was a sufficient Direction and Charge to the Ministers of Justice, and it is so to every one,
in

in whatever station he is, *Do faithfully in the Fear of God.*

Cic. Or. Pro. S. Rosc. As all Vice is dishonourable, so, what is there more ignominious than Perfidiousness? *Perditissimi est hominis, fallere eum, qui Lasus non esset nisi credidisset,* saith the Philosopher. None but the most Villianous, will deceive him, who had been safe but for trusting. And yet this is the very case, whenever we fail in the Duties of our respective stations and places. There is

Oportet hominem ab homine, ob id ipsum quod homo sit, non alienum videri. Cic. de Finib. l. 3.

a Relation of one to another as Men, and in all our dealing with each other, there is a Trust and Confidence which ought to be inviolable. As every one hath a Right to fair dealing; so he depends upon others, and confides in them for performance. God and Nature hath linked us together, by making us necessary for each other. No Man singly is sufficient for himself, nor knowing in all Things; but each has his Province, his Station, his Profession, Art or Trade, that by his skill and faithfulness therein, he may supply the deficiencies of others; who accordingly repose a Trust and Confidence in him. To fail that Confidence by Ignorance and Unskilfulness, is injurious and ignominious; but to abuse such Trust by Unfaithfulness and Knavery, is vile and detestable, and such do the worst

Qui fidem ledit, oppugnat omnium commune praelidum, & quantum in ipso est disturbat vitæ Societatem. Cic. Pro. S. Rosc.

that can be by themselves, and by Mankind. For if mutual Trust and Confidence fail, all comfortable Society ceaseth with it: And better it were, to live apart in Solitude, then with such, whom we always dread, and are Jealous of them in every thing, because they are departed from Truth and Honesty. But

But there are also more peculiar Relations of one Man to another, from whence special Trusts do result; which to answer faithfully, they are bound by the strictest bonds of Nature and Religion, of Honour and Conscience.

Thus (for instance) all Authority and Power, is a Trust reposed by God and Men, in the hands of some for the benefit of others; for the controlling of Evil-doers, and for the helping such to right, who suffer wrong: And that Right be maintained according to Law and Equity, is what Men justly expect, and claim from those who have the Authority and Power; who are concern'd in Honour and Conscience not to fail such reasonable expectation and demands. It is an Honourable Trust reposed in them, made Sacred by the Oath of God, and which concerns the most important Interest of Mankind. They are the Ministers of God in doing right to All; and in this they are Benefactors to Mankind; and by their faithfulness and diligence it is, that they consult to themselves a Glorious Reward from God, and just Esteem and Honour from Men.

Ratio hoc postulat, ne
quid fallaciter, ne quid in-
fidiose, ne quid simulate.
Cic. Ib.

Rom. 13.
3. 4.

But not to enlarge farther; in whatever place or Relation we stand in to each other, there is a Trust resulting from thence, of which a faithful discharge is justly claim'd and reasonably expected, and by such Fidelity we discharge our Conscience, take care of our Honour, and do our Duty to God and Man.

That is, when we carefully enquire into the right of every Case; and set our selves impartially to do that which is Right. We must be True to our selves, in forming a Right Judgment of what is reasonable

and just; and then faithful to all Men in doing them such Right and Justice: And we cannot pretend to Religion and the Fear of God, unless we do so. Such faithfulness Nature Teacheth, and Religion Cultivateth, the Precepts thereof do enjoin it, the Principles thereof do effect it; and this is for the Honour of Religion, when it renders its Votaries better in all respects, being furnish'd with Understanding and Wisdom, to know what is right and fit, and with a Heart and Will to do it.

3dly, Such faithfulness issueth from a perfect Heart, and is accompanied with a good Conscience. As we must do faithfully with our whole Heart, applying our selves therunto, without any reservation; so the faithful Heart is perfect; i. e. sound and entire, whole and well at ease: Whereas unfaithfulness wounds the Conscience deeply, divides the Man miserably, and sets him wretchedly against himself. The mind hath great Satisfaction and Pleasure in finding out the Truth and Right; but greater still in adhering to it, whatever

Temptations there may be to the contrary. And as the greatest bodily pains are nothing, in comparison with the Anguish of the Mind: So nothing sits more uneasie upon the Spirit, than the consciousness of unfaithful and dishonest dealing, of failing right, and betraying Trust. And especially where Perjury is added to Perfidiousness; and the Oath of God is violated as well as Faith to Men. When Judas had betray'd his Master, he could no longer endure himself. The treacherous Mind has no rest,

Fides Sanctissimum humani pectoris bonum est, nulla necessitate ad fallendum cogitur, nullo corrumpitur premio. Senec. Ep. 88.

rest, the sense of Perfidy haunts and frights him Night and Day; at Home and Abroad, he seeks to hide his shame, and would if possible flee from himself. For Ignorance cannot be pleaded, in things so manifest to every ones Conscience; as, that Faith is to be kept, Trust satisfied, Right maintained, and Justice done to all Men. All dishonesty is deliberate and willful practice, and therefore makes a wide breach in the Conscience, and the guilt thereof sits heavy on the Mind. He must be a *Case-harden'd Knave*, and have a Conscience seared as with a hot Iron; that is not stung with the imputation of Treachery, and remembrance of Perfidiousness.

Sua quemq; fraus, & suus
terror maxime vexat; suum
quemq; scelus agitat amen-
tiaq; afficit: Suae malae cogi-
tationes conscientiaq; animi-
terrent. Cic. Pr. S. Rosc.

As then we value the Peace of our own Minds, if we would have Hearts ease and Self enjoyment; charge we our selves in our several stations, to *Do Faithfully in the Fear of the Lord*: Without which, all our pretences to Religion are empty Prattle, or tinsel Hypocrisie. "To be True and Faithful is an Imitation of God, and recommends us to his Favour; and these Things are good and profitable for Men; we are framed to them in our Nature, we have need of them for our well being, they are the security that one Man hath from another, and by them is the World up-held.

When we deny Right, or abuse our Trust, we force our selves; we do that which is unnatural and base, and odious with God and Men. We do thereupon, by false colours, seek to cover our shame from the cognisance of Men; but from God and from our own Consciences we can't hide the abomination. We

have done what we cannot answer to our selves; and what we must answer, *i. e.* be sadly accountable for, unto God: Who hath placed us in his Family, and trusted us with his Talents, and will reckon severely, with such unprofitable and wicked Servants. To search out the Right of every Case, this is our Wisdom; and to comply therewith, this is goodness: And these together make a perfect Heart, and produce Hearts-ease; render a Man satisfied with himself, agreeable and pleasing to others, and approved and accepted of God.

Pass we now from General to some particular Application of what hath been said. And surely this matter is not so well consider'd as it should be, by too many; who are far from renouncing Religion, and the Fear of God, but yet very negligent of this great instance and branch of Religion, doing faithfully to Men.

Such are they, who take Professions upon them, or thrust themselves into Employments; for which they are not qualified, by competent understanding and skill. Whence it comes to pass, that those that have to do with them, and rely upon them, fail of that assistance and benefit, which they might reasonably expect; and suffer much in their Estates, or Health, yea perhaps in their Spiritual and Eternal Interests; through the Ignorance and unskilfulness of those in whom they confide. For, tho People are too easy of Trust, and the Mountebank in every Profession hath generally most followers, yet certainly, it is want of Honour and Conscience to take advantage of their Credulity: And

And to receive their Money, without regarding their help and benefit. What scandalous baseness were it, to pretend to direct a Traveller in the way we know not; or to lead a blind Man who leans upon us, into a Wood, or a Bog, and there leave him to make his way out, by such other help as he can call? And is not this the very case of those, who make no Conscience of sitting themselves, for the Employments which they undertake; and so by their unskilfulness mislead, and grieve, hurt, and perhaps ruin those that Trust them? Certainly this is not doing faithfully in the Fear of God.

Again, where is the Fidelity, or what the Honour and Conscience of such, who imagine the skill of their Profession to be meerly for themselves; to enable them to be too hard for those who are not so knowing? It is because Men cannot attend many things at once, nor be skilfull in all; that Arts and Professions are divided amongst them: and every one is, and must be trusted in his own. But to take Advantage hence, to deceive, and defraud those, who are necessitated to trust them; is infamous Knavery, and unnatural baseness. Yet this, I fear too many think, is the Fruit of their skill; and that they have studied their Trade, or Art, to little purpose, if they may not out wit, and over-reach those, who are unacquainted with it.

Again, is it not shameful unfaithfulness, and against the Fear (because against the express Command) of God,

Hoc secundum naturam est, neminem id agere, ut ex alterius inscientia prædetur. Cic. de Offic. l. 3.

Quo enim quis versutior & callidior, hoc inviscor & suspectior, detracta opinione probitantis. Cic. de Off. l. 2.

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to have respect of Persons, or to be partial in Judgment? What is Right and Reason, ought ever to be the Rule and Measure for all Men; and will be so where Honour and Conscience take place.

But to alter the judgment of the Case, when the Person only is changed, this is not Faithful dealing. And yet how common is this partiality; how very favourable are Men in the same Case, when a Friend or Parry is concern'd, in which they are most rigorous, and without all consideration of what is fair and equal, if it be the Case of such who differ from them in Opinion or Interest? Yea where almost shall we find an Arbitrator, who doth not think himself bound to favour that side on which he is call'd; whereas he is chosen to search out the Truth; and to do right indifferently, between the contending Parties. How prone are Witnesses to be byas'd in favour of those who bring them; and either to conceal their Knowledge, or to affirm beyond it? Forgetting the Oath of God that is upon them, to declare the Truth for the maintenance of Right; instead of *Witnesses* they make themselves Judges of the Case; and so too often occasion a wrong Determination and Judgment. But let these consider, that the wrong thus done, by their mincing the matter, concealing their Knowledge, or uttering more than they know, will lye at their door and they shall be guilty before God of wrong doing, and of Perjury for ever.

Again, is this to do faithfully, to leave things in secret Trust, and but half done? Which is the practice of such who love to have a hank upon others, and

to keep them in servile dependence. Fair and faithful dealing, is open and frank; takes care to have Agreements well settled, and Trusts sufficiently declar'd. A Faithful and Ingenious Person, would not have it in his Power, to disappoint or grieve others; nor any room left for misunderstanding, nor any colour or pretence for being worse than his Word. How many and great are the Mischiefs arising, from this imprudent and unfair practice, of leaving things upon secret promise, without due and sufficient declaration and settlement? What unkind differences hath this occasion'd between nearest Friends; what grievous and vexatious Law-Suits? What irreconcilable contests? "In which the one barely affirming, and the other denying, and neither being able to make proof, "what Determination can there be? Or what can a Judge or Arbitrator do? He that means fairly and intends honourably, why should he not desire to have his meaning fully declar'd, and his Contracts fully establish'd and sufficiently testify'd; so that all who are concern'd may know what to trust to, and if any differences shall arise, others may be able to Judge and Determine it; which is highly necessary, because of the proness of every Man, to be partial, and too favourable in his own Case?

Other instances too many, might be alledged, of departure from Ingenious, Fair, and Faithful dealing, which is too commonly indulged: But that I may not be tedious, I beg your Attention but for one more.

Honesti enim bonis viris,
non occulta quæ runtur. Cic.
de Off. l. 3.

And

And that is an instance of a Trust, as Sacred and Honourable, and wherein the Interests of Religion and of the Church of Christ are immediately, and eminently concern'd. I mean the Trust reposed in Patrons to present fit Persons, that may be appointed guides of Souls, in the respective Churches committed to their Care. The planting of Good and Prudent Ministers, in good and competent Livings is one of the surest and best means to establish true Religion: which being the Foundation, and cement of Humane Societies; it is (if we look no farther) very impolitick, and of ill consequence to the publick, to have little or no regard, of the qualification of the Persons who are to fill such Posts. For, doubtless, as bad as the World is, it would soon be much worse, if all the Churches to which Patrons nominate, were fill'd with an ignorant and vicious Clergy. And such they may all be, for any care of them, who transfer their Right, and sell their Trust, without other consideration than of the price to be paid them. And as it may be justly presumed, that those are not the most deserving, who are most forward to drive such Bargains: So (as a great Prelate hath it) what account have they of the Clergy and their Function, who value them only as Cattle in a Market, by the Money they will yield.

Even in the dark times of Popery there remained amongst the Nobility and Gentry of this Nation, so much of Honour and Conscience; as to resent and abominate the Frauds of Monks, and to make grievous Complaints against them: For turning to their own profit the Right of Patronage, which they had gain'd

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by an Opinion of their Sanctity ; and because they were deemed best able and most willing to find out fit Persons to take care of Souls. This Right, was never thought to be other, than an Honourable and Sacred Trust ; and to make a gain of it, was rightly judged as infamous as a Guardian to cheat and wrong the Orphan.

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The Faithful discharge of this important Trust, doth singular Service to the Church, and to Religion : And maintains the Esteem and Honour, and Interests of such Patrons, being a lasting Obligation both upon the Minister and the People, who are sensible of the benefit. But what will be the fatal Consequences of sordid Traffick ; or where the growing Mischief will end who can tell ? What a decay of Learning and Religion will this discouragement of both introduce ; when it shall be found that Merit of either sort, is little valued, but Money answers all things ? What shall reconcile young Persons, desirous of ease and pleasure, to the confinement and pains of Study, necessary to improve and fit them for their future Business ; when they are beforehand sure of Preferment by a purchase ; or else despair of it, and are never the nearer, for all their Study, Improvements and Sobriety.

What a large step is this to the introducing of Barbarism, by rendring the Office of the Clergy an unlearned and contemptible Vocation ? What Temptation doth hence arise to the People, to lessen and vilifie their Minister whose price they know, or whom they suspect to have been set over them, by indirect and

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corrupt Practices? Will the Clergy think themselves concerned to support the Honour and Interests of such Patrons, to whom they are only obliged for a hard bargain; and will not the People think both of them to have the Church and Religion very little at Heart; who in a Trust so Sacred and Important seem to mind nothing but Buying and Selling and getting of Gain? And will not such away of Traffick countenanc'd and allowed, subvert and ruin the best Church in the World?

I will not insist upon the Sacrilegious diminishing of those Revenues, which have been Dedicated to God for the maintenance of his Ministers, with such solemn Execrations and Anathemas against all the Invaders of them. Yet are these Revenues so much lessen'd, as there is given upon every vacancy for an Income: And may in the Progress of this corrupt Practice, come to be wholly the Patrons property, who with the same Right and Conscience, may demand Ten, or Twelve, as One or Two Years purchase. Neither will I enlarge upon the great Temptation, and dangerous Snare into which the Purchaser is led; either to trifle with a most Solemn Oath, or to cheat his Conscience, with artificial Silvo's, and studied Evasions. When as it is evident, that the Oath against Symony was in use before the Statute; and is enjoyn'd by the Cannon for greater security and better fence against all corrupt practice: And the Word Symonaical was intended as a brand of *Infamy* upon all *Indirect* Traffick, as well as *Express* bargaining; but not to excuse such practice, however corrupt, and pernicious, as the Rehnement and Cunning of Lawyers can make to be Statutable.

But

But I forbear farther urging this point, as being far from intending to provoke Persons, or aggravate Things; meaning only fairly to propose, that, which I think ought to be Soberly and Seriously consider'd. And I do in the Name of God beseech all, who are Honour'd with this Sacred and Important Trust, to consider how much their Honour and Conscience are concern'd, in a due discharge thereof; and then to do Faithfully in the Fear of God: And not to be bribed by the Lucre of a little Money, to countenance and establish a practice so pernicious to this most Excellent Church; which God hath so Wonderfully preserved, which Her Majesty doth so graciously protect, and bountifull encourage; and which can only by such corruptions growing within her self, be ruin'd and destroy'd.

And to conclude, let us all remember, and at all times, that these two, the Fear of God, and doing Faithfully are never to be divided. So that Religion is but pretended, where faithfulness and performance of Trust is neglected: And to make Zeal for what we call Religion, the Pretext and Occasion for unfair and injurious treatment of each other; is an abominable prophanation of it.

And let all who at this, or any other time, are concerned in the Administration of Justice or maintaining of Right, remember that they act before God, and for him; and are accountable unto him, who is the Faithful and True God, and a Lover of Right, and with whom is no respect of persons. Their Conscience will be a Witness, and so is God likewise, with

with what Faithfulness and diligence they do apply themselves, to search out the Truth, and to establish Right. And if they have any other Ends and Aim God the Searcher of Hearts, knoweth their Thoughts and will bring every Secret Thing, into open Judgment and Reward every one according to his Work. *Therefore shall ye do: In the Fear of God Faithfully, and with a perfect Heart.*



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